JANUARY 1961

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*How the Devil Does It* — JOHN CALVIN REID

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*The Greatest Misconception* — JAMES DAANE

*Calvin on Union with Christ* — WILLIAM K. STOB

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The Reformed Journal

A PERIODICAL OF REFORMED COMMENT & OPINION

Volume XI — No. 1

JANUARY, 1961

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## *In This Issue*

Professor John Timmerman with his practiced eye uncovers seven pitfalls in reading that endanger us readers and the authors whom we read. In guiding us around the pitfalls Dr. Timmerman defines good reading and points us to its proper goal, good understanding.

Dr. John Calvin Reid sets forth Satan's own account of how he works within the church of Christ and exerts his devilish influence on the lukewarm members. He pinpoints the satanic technique as that of getting people to "hedge," showing how the technique operates in church attendance, service, and stewardship.

The Reverend J. K. van Baalen again prods our conventional way of thinking about evolution with a few well-aimed remarks on the third and sixth days of creation. He concludes by spelling out what his proposed new attitude means for Christian education.

Editor James Daane concludes his extended discussion of Professor G. C. Berkouwer's study of God's election with an illuminating analysis of the greatest distortion of this biblical doctrine. Such gross distortion is a constant temptation, it resides in the hearts of believers themselves, and it occurs when they forget that God elects *in grace*. The result of it is Pharisaism — a set of beliefs and an attitude not limited to the Jews of Jesus' time.

The Reverend William Stob, a young pastor now serving the church in Florida, is concerned to show that the biblical teaching of union with Christ is at the very heart of John Calvin's thought and life. Mr. Stob makes out such a strong and convincing case that one may wonder why this teaching does not appear as dominant in contemporary Calvinistic and Reformed preaching.

Professor J. G. Vanden Bosch reminds us again of what the church of Jesus Christ is made of when he opens up to our view the life and heart of John Post, servant of the church's Lord.

The Reverend Leonard Verduin has some interesting observations to make on the practice carried on by some Reformed churches of closing the Lord's Table to all except those who bear the label "Reformed" as it is narrowly, and unhistorically, defined.

# As We See It

## FOREVER OUTSIDE?

The quest for church unity stirred hopes and hearts at the General Assembly of the National Council of Churches meeting in San Francisco early in December. Preaching in Grace Episcopal Cathedral on "A Proposal for the Unity of Christ's Church," Dr. Eugene Carson Blake, Stated Clerk of the United Presbyterian Church, declared, "I propose to the Protestant Episcopal Church that it, together with the United Presbyterian Church in the United States, invite the Methodist Church and the United Church of Christ to form with us a plan of church union both catholic and reformed. . . ." Indicative of the spirit of unity was the fact that Evangelist Billy Graham at the invitation of the Rt. Rev. James A. Pike, Episcopal Bishop of California, preached in this stately gray cathedral on swanky Nob Hill to a standing-room crowd only.

The Rev. Pike likened Blake's proposal to the Reformation itself in significance, and to the unification of the churches of South India. Lesslie Newbigin, Bishop of the United Church of South India, solemnly warned, however, that each church should first "study each other's heresies," and that the churches considering unity will make a great mistake if they "only think in terms of administrative unity — ecclesiastical joinery — and not in terms of God's truth." He admonished: "Think of the problem of recovering unity in terms of Christ — not just mechanics." He added that an effective merger is possible only if the churches involved "go back to the Lord Himself for understanding. This is essential because there is something the church needs more than what money can buy. It needs a personal knowledge and consecration to Jesus Christ, our living Saviour. It needs the power to communicate the Gospel to others." This, as we see it, is plain talk to the issue. Premature, ill-advised, and easy attempts at church mergers, which skirt rather than face the difficulties, will only conceive and bring forth organizational monstrosities.

At the final evening session Bishop Newbigin addressed the General Assembly and a public audience of about 2,000 on "The Church's Mission to the Nations." He sought to bring consolation to a generation living amidst revolution by reminding it that not only is Christ's death and resurrection the greatest revolutionary event of all time, but it is a revolution that precipitates all others by bringing all men and nations into a time of grace and judgment. The revolutions of our time ought therefore not to come as a surprise. They are to be expected. Nor ought they to be feared, for they are under the determination now, and under the final disposition in the last day, of Him who is the Lord of grace and judgment.

Newbigin concluded his solemn and arresting speech with a warning stated in polite and gracious, but unmistakable terms. The warning seemed to be directed especially to the American churches. We ought not, warned Newbigin, to fear Communism so much that we are misled by our fear and allow the Communists *on their own basis* to diagnose the problem and prescribe the remedy. Economic assistance, aid to undeveloped countries, and the sharing of our technical skills is necessary and required. But what the revolutionary convulsive upheavals of our times require is something that cannot be purchased with money or goods. It is only the radical gospel of Christ's life, death, and resurrection that can resolve our social revolutions and bring peace to our crises that it has by its grace and judgment induced. If out of an undue fear of Communism we foolishly accept its diagnosis of our sickness and its prescription for our healing, we may be forced to consider that Christ Himself and His disciples were undeveloped and underprivileged people.

If voices like that of Newbigin are invited, welcomed, and heard within the highest precincts of the National Council of Churches, is this council of churches such that conservative denominations ought to remain on the outside unheard? It is surely legitimate to ask whether a sector of the church ought to remain outside a communion of churches which allows a free expression of the gospel of Christ. There are, admittedly, many things in our American churches which bring pain to the heart and grief to the spirits of those who love the Church. But did not the United Church of South India accomplish more through the voice of its Bishop than we who are on the outside and speak of these things only with each other? Would we not be more obedient to our Lord, and truer to ourselves and the Body of Christ, if we did not abandon what the Lord has not abandoned? Our Lord said he that is not against Me is for Me. If we judge by this judgment of charity, will we not conclude that it is more significant that the National Council does not exclude the true believers of the gospel, than that it does not always exclude those who do not? Given sufficient time, a united Protestant church will emerge. It will emerge out of the combined complex of a liberalistic, a well-meaning, evangelical but-not-quite-knowing-what-it-does-Christianity, and out of an orthodox Christianity which is critical, but on the outside, holding its peace. If the future does present us with a united Protestant church, will not our present easy silence turn into a troubled and uneasy sense of guilt? What are we doing to prevent the thing we so much fear? "When I kept guilty silence, my strength was spent with grief."

He that is not against Me is for Me. This is the judgment of charity and grace. Let us be as charitable and gracious toward the National Council of Churches in America as Christ is charitable and gracious toward sinners. Whether we like it or not, the National Council of Churches in America constitutes a considerable segment of the Church of Christ in our time. J.D.

# Focus on the 60's

WE HAVE NOW ENTERED upon the seventh decade of the twentieth century and the second decade of the life of the *Reformed Journal*.

January is an appropriate time for marking transitions such as these, for this month takes its name from the Roman god Janus, whose one face looked back while his other face steadfastly looked into the future.

We as Editorial Board propose in this new year to cast a glance back along the way the *Reformed Journal* has been led through ten eventful years. More significantly, we trust, it is our intention to look ahead, equally in faith, into this most challenging, most threatening, most exciting, most frightening decade of human history.

We will ask, and suggest as best we can, answers to such questions as these: what are the theological challenges posed by the tumultuous 60's to our own denominational Branch of the universal Vine; and what are the theological requisites essential to meeting responsibly these challenges?

Again, what will this decade ask morally and spiritually of us collectively and personally; and what requisites do creative answers demand?

Once more, what lay and pulpit opportunities, with corresponding obligations, will this decade thrust upon us?

More, what ecumenical and mission perspectives dawn with the new decade; and how shall we gird ourselves once again to meet them?

And still further, what is the rhetorical etiquette essential to a fruitful discussion of these and other matters, both among ourselves and with those of other Branches?

These are our aspirations. We propose to give to the discussion of these and similar problems such talents as we have been entrusted with, knowing full well, and rejoicing in it, that whatever may be the increase, it is from the Lord whom all of us — readers and writers alike — as brethren seek to serve.

We believe that these times call upon us all, as individuals and as an organized component of the one body of our Lord in history, to trade in faith more than ever before on all the markets of the world with the rich talents God has entrusted to our denominational charge. For we believe the Christian Reformed Church is a blessed Church, a strong Church, a loyal and orthodox Church, rich in talents of countless variety. But we know that riches imply stewardship. And we know that if the life in which stewardship is assumed ever was static, it is so no longer. And we know, moreover, that stewards who do not rise to their stewardship sink back into futility. The miser's lot is misery. We believe that to save for ourselves alone the riches we have is, in the long run, to lose what we save.

All this is commonplace. Calvin taught it. Calvin lived it, in times as shattered and shattering as ours. Neither his day, nor ours, is a day for complacency, timidity, weariness, retrospect. If such be our temptations, let us leave them where we pray; and if we cannot accept the call, let us then cheer on those who, like Calvin, will not surrender to foreboding and despair.

We invite you, readers and friends of the *Journal*, brethren all, to face with us this new decade in calm assurance, sure faith, hearty confidence, eager anticipation. Not in our own strength, but in our Lord's!

What, then, will tomorrow be? and next year? God knows — that is enough!

What, then, will we together be able to make of this decade, we so small, so few? God calls — that is enough! God empowers — that is more than enough!

—L.D.K.

# Seven Pitfalls in Reading

*by John Timmerman*

GOOD READING is a painstaking art and the average person learns it the hard way. There are no short cuts through the classics. Great books defy simplification and simplified versions are so much watered milk. Though good books give great pleasure, some intellectual blasting is often necessary before they yield their gold. I have noted seven obstacles to good reading habits in college students and adults.

### *Sloth*

Many readers are just lazy. If the meaning is not on the level of the daily paper, the *Reader's Digest,* and the poetry on Burma Shave advertisements, they consider the writer obscure and themselves absolved from further effort. They dodge new words and view the dictionary with distaste. They hate mental sweat and turn in relief to the effortless spectacle of the sunbaked walkdown in the evening T.V. western. If they read at all they peruse the lighter best sellers, costume romances, and happiness books; and they turn for their heavier reading to the middlebrow mist of Norman V. Peale. In so doing they weaken their minds and violate their possibilities.

### *Weariness*

Sometimes readers are not lazy but tired. Having tried all day to sell houses or insurance, saw boards or drive trucks, manage offices or appease disagreeable people, they are intellectually and nervously exhausted. To suggest to them after eight hours of battering labor to read Eliot's "Four Quartets" or Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* seems a snobbish effrontery. After all, professional readers devote their *best* hours to this reading. The strenuous and eroding demands of our frenzied pace make leisurely reading difficult. I often meet gifted and intelligent people somewhat conscience-stricken at their inability to engage in significant reading. These people are in a genuine dilemma, and the only answer I can find lies in a rigid exclusion of certain good activities in favor of certain better ones. However difficult, a person with imagination and resolution can find an hour here and there.

### *Prejudice*

Prejudice is a set of colored glasses through which the reader sees black or white or red. The prejudiced reader reads into a book instead of in it. Having his mind made up, he distorts instead of absorbing. He sees everything in terms of a principle instead of evaluating by it. A good deal of modern literary criticism, it seems to me, has been guilty of understanding works of art in terms of an apriori principle of evaluation rather than in terms of an author's own words. The Marxist reads a novel of social unease and regards it as an ideological protest. The Freudian reads a poem as the "disguised expression and fulfillment of repressed wishes" or as a symbol of even deeper unresolved tensions. Thus *Alice in Wonderland* changes from a charming fantasy to the dreary wish fulfillment of a bachelor mathematics professor. There is a famous and inept life of E. A. Poe which badly misreads him because the author sees all his work and life in terms of psychological abnormality without regard to the literary conventions of his time. The primitivists read Mark Twain primarily as a myth maker. The Darwinians find in literature the illustration of evolutionary laws instead of a richly imaginative world. The impressionistic critic reads the novel, then he gives us an account of his own glowing mind. The academic critic concentrates upon the formal aspects of the work of art, content to explore the relationship of means to ends. All of these prominent methods seem to put the critic's rather than the author's mind in the central position. Methods have become masters. Principles are valid when they judge instead of prejudging works of art. The reader never sees the evidence because of his principles. Now this does not, of course, mean that the reader is, or should be, a mindless sponge soaking up all experience in an uncritical fashion. Every intelligent reader has a basic commitment in terms of which he judges whatever he reads, but every intelligent reader seeks to understand sympathetically and fairly what he reads before he evaluates it.

### *The Author in His Age*

Good reading begins with understanding. Relying upon intelligence, imagination, sympathy, and intuition, the reader wins his way to a comprehension of the author's meaning on his own terms in his own time. This involves some sharing of another person's mind however opposed one may be to it. It involves going through another's experience even when it is alien. We must seek to understand a writer on his terms before we judge him on ours. Since so many classics deal with the past, the reader must divest himself, at least partially, of his present mind and assume a past mind. If he is reading Chaucer, he must understand that the pervasive weeping of warriors is not the result of a chronic emotional catarrh but rather a sign of true feeling. Pity was a true sign of the gentle heart in Chaucer's time and it was vocal. One of the most annoying habits of certain modern critics is the attempt not to discuss what the author actually meant to say with his rational mind and with all the literary skill available to him, but

rather what he was actually saying without knowing he was saying it. So the gentle critic finds in "Rip Van Winkle" mythology, a return to the womb, and a spiritual regeneration. (Ah, that wicked flagon!) The good reader seeks first to know what the author meant when he said it. Fancy psychoanalysis of what lies behind it seems to me distinctly a fringe benefit, if that.

### *False Modesty*

Modesty is a virtue, and no Christian reader of much contemporary literature will fail to find a great deal of immodesty. Our social preoccupation with sex reflects itself in American writing, and sex and sin are often exploited to nauseous limits. The springs of Helicon are often contaminated with bilge water. Only a depraved taste can enjoy *Peyton Place* or much of John O'Hara, even if they are best sellers. But such a judgment is something quite different from that which restricts literature to the prim and prudish, that eliminates from serious treatment the basic sins and tragic follies of human beings. Man is a sinner, and he cannot be described in lily white. The saints and sinners of the Bible are honestly portrayed. If the serious writer were to portray only incredibly virtuous men and women living incredibly virtuous lives he would be a traitor to his mission. The essence of the matter lies not so much in subject matter as in its religious and moral framework. If the sin in a book inevitably ruins lives, and if doom follows immoral delight, if sin is shown for what it is, and if the portrayal is handled with restraint, it is false modesty to ban the book for mature reading. *Cry, the Beloved Country* is a picture of human depravity illuminated by the grieving heart of a Christian father and the love of God. To reject such a book is a refusal to face the sad fact of man's lost condition.

### *Pride and Anger*

Pride consists in critical omniscience; it marks the reader who knows all the answers on every side of a matter, who never imagines that another may be right, and if he does, will not admit it. He can distinguish "a hair twixt South and Southwest side," and that is just about all. He wears the toga of the judge, the robes of the jury, and is ever ready to wield the ax of the executioner. He is a bad reader because he never learns anything and often abuses those who do. When his opinions are challenged, his pride often joins with anger, and an exchange of ideas becomes an obsession for victory and unconditional surrender.

### *Fear*

Reading is both a good adventure and a peril. Good writing is the most persuasive way of saying things and just because it is electrically charged it involves risk as well as profit. The two are often inextricably intertwined. The novels of George Eliot, to take an established classic often read in high schools, are full of sympathetic understanding of human nature, charming humor, and life-like pictures of rural England, but they are all predicated on a false image of man and a stoical moral system without grace or redemption. The novels of Hemingway give an amazingly accurate picture of a blank, naturalistic world. They help us understand our time, but they operate with nothing at the center — a world without God. Some readers fear such books, and, indeed, some readers should shun them. But if one is established in the faith, has learned to read with imaginative and critical reserve and appreciation for insights displayed and fine art practiced, and if he possesses a firm determination to judge all by Christian conviction, fear is replaced by a sense of humble duty to understand and assess the culture in which one lives. Even unchristian books may nurture the spiritual growth of the Christian, if that Christian by the grace of God is determined that Christ shall have the pre-eminence in all things.

# *"How the Devil Does It . . ."*

## *by John Calvin Reid*

*"I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth."* —Revelation 3:15, 16 (RSV)

I HAD THE STRANGEST DREAM a few nights ago. . . . In this dream I was seated comfortably in my study, my face buried in a book entitled *The Screwtape Letters,* when none other than His Satanic Majesty knocked on the door — and without waiting for an invitation, walked in! Also uninvited he took a seat in the chair opposite mine.

"Sorry I did not get around to shaking your hand at the reception," he began, "but I was there! It was quite a party — they blew you up like a gas

balloon, didn't they?"

"What do you mean?" I said, "You know they were sincere — they meant every word they said!"

"It's not the people I'm thinking about," he replied, "but you — I don't know when I have seen you so puffed up! As I watched you beaming and shaking hands, I wondered if you had never read what one of your favorite authors once wrote about a man 'thinking of himself more highly than he ought to think'!"

"It wasn't pride," I said, just a little irritated, "it was gratitude!"

"Call it what you will," he said, "but I should know pride when I see it! That was the sin that got me thrown out of heaven, remember. And when I see a fellow riding as high as you were that afternoon, I am reminded of another verse in that Book you are so fond of quoting."

"What verse?" I asked, nettled but curious.

"Proverbs 6:18," he replied, and then in mock piety he quoted it word for word: " 'Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall'."

I could not miss the point, and felt more irritated than ever. "Well, now that you have quoted it," I said, "you may go. You are trying to ruin my memory of our reception and I don't care to hear any more."

"Not so fast," he said. "It is not your way to quote a Bible verse and then stop. Sunday after Sunday you expound for twenty-five minutes or so after quoting your text! Suppose you listen for once while I expound to you. I'll get you down out of the clouds in short order, I promise you."

"But a minister needs to be up in the clouds occasionally," I argued. "He needs encouragement just like everyone else."

"It's more important that he be realistic," the devil replied. "Besides, encouragement is one commodity in which I do not deal. But in the direction of realism, has it not occurred to you to ask, now that the reception is over, what about the members who don't give a hoot about the church, or anything connected with it?"

At this point I had not a word to say. The devil had laid his finger upon the heaviest burden on my heart — my pastoral concern for those who are members in name only!

It was evident that he was enjoying my discomfort as he went on to say: "Your so-called 'nominal members' are my pride and joy. They are my proof that I am as successful, in many cases far more so, than you! For you see," he added with a cocky leer, "when you get them to confess Christ as their Saviour and to take those solemn vows of loyalty and service and I later persuade them to slip back into their old attitudes and habits, it is a sort of double victory to me. It's like being behind in a football game, then taking advantage of a fumble and running for the winning touchdown! It's like winning the World Series in the last inning of the seventh game! I get ever so much more fun out of backsliders than out of sinners who never desert my side!"

"I hadn't thought of it that way," I said. But I saw the devil's point.

"Another thing," he added, "it counts more in my campaign against the church. You see," he continued, "people who never join the church cannot hurt it very much. Under the influence of my persuasion, they may despise the church, hurl all kinds of criticism against church people, and oppose everything the church stands for, but all of this is discounted by others on the ground that these are outsiders and therefore prejudiced and unfair. No, the ones who really count on my side are the insiders, the ones known as hypocrites or quitters. How I love and encourage such people, just as I once loved and encouraged Judas Iscariot and Benedict Arnold!

"In your church alone," he continued, "as you must realize, I have several hundred such — on your roll but on my side!"

I hated to admit that he was right. "Not altogether on your side, and certainly not to be classed as traitors," I said. "They are not really *against* the church. They are only lukewarm and indifferent."

"Call them what you will," he answered, "but I find it rather amusing that you should undertake to defend them when the Book you are always quoting says: 'I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth.' "

I realized he had me in a corner. "I am not defending them," I said, "but neither do I find it easy to disown them. And I must confess they puzzle as well as trouble me. I cannot for the life of me understand how you exert so much power over them. Surely they know you for the evil spirit you are, in spite of all your clever disguises. They know the difference between right and wrong. They know that Christianity offers them their only hope of peace of conscience in this life and their only hope of salvation in the life that is yet to be. They know that the church of Christ represents the kingdom of God on earth and that their profession of faith when they joined the church was the most sacred vow they could ever make. And they made it publicly, standing before the altar of their church, promising 'with the aid of the Holy Spirit to be Christ's faithful disciples to their life's end, to make diligent use of the means of grace, to share faithfully in the worship and service of the Church, to

give of their substance as the Lord might prosper them, and to give their whole heart to the service of Christ and His kingdom throughout the world.'

"At the very same service where these sacred vows were affirmed, they received the Holy Communion. It would seem that nothing you could do or say would ever pull them away from their Lord and their church after that! How you manage it is beyond me!"

"My technique is quite simple," he said, and it was easy to see he was feeling quite superior at this point. "I begin with the premise that human nature is basically selfish, and as long as I can keep it that way I am sure to win in the end, all good intentions and promises to the contrary! I am not disturbed by the vows members make or the emotions they feel at the time of joining, or at any other time, so long as I can keep them hedging!"

"What do you mean by 'hedging'?" I asked.

"Now don't tell me you don't understand that word!" he replied. "I mean holding something back — joining with one or more mental reservations. I mean anything less than a full commitment to the Lordship of Christ, anything short of seeking first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. When a man in joining the church he also joins himself to Christ, saying: 'I surrender all, not my will but Thine be done'; when he carries his dedication to the point of saying:

*Take myself, and I will be*
*Ever, only, all for Thee . . .'*

that kind of member is too much for me! But as you know, few take their membership that seriously or carry their dedication that far. Somewhere along the line they 'hedge,' and there I find my golden opportunity!

**"I get some to hedge on attendance.**

"In the ear of their consciences sooner or later I whisper: 'This idea of being in church every Sunday, rain, snow, or sunshine, is expecting too much. A better plan is to make the decision week by week. One needs to make allowance for late Saturday-night engagements, for bad weather, for week-end company and other eventualities.'

"Such is the line I use. I suggest attendance upon the basis of *flexible convenience* rather than upon the basis of *definite commitment.* I recommend conditional attendance, then I slip in more and more conditions as time goes on! And you must admit my plan works rather well. You count the ones absent! Out of twenty-eight hundred, who has the better batting average, you or I?"

The devil was gloating, and I had no answer but an embarrassed silence which he was thoroughly enjoying.

After a moment he resumed:

**"I get others to hedge on service.**

"I understand you are repeatedly reminding your members that a church as large as yours cannot run itself. It must have faithful officers, teachers, secretaries, singers in the choirs, chairmen of committees, men and women willing to make visits for their church, etc. You are continually pleading for members who will respond by saying, 'Here am I, send me.'

"The motto with which I counter is, 'Let George do it!' In addition, I encourage your people to measure their relationship to their church by just one standard, 'What do I get out of it?' — never by, 'What can I give to it?' I do everything I can to keep their temperature down and to make them content with the status quo — both with regard to their church and with regard to their personal spiritual condition.

"I have a lot to say about 'moderation in all things.' As soon as I can get a man to thinking that 'religion is all very well up to a point,' I feel quite happy about his soul! I concentrate upon persuading your members to do little or nothing for their church, to stay on the receiving end!

"As long as they do not convert their good intentions into actions, I have no cause for worry. No amount of pious feeling will count for anything unless it is expressed in some form of action. In fact, the more often they feel without acting, the less they will be able to act, and in the long run the less they will even feel!

"You see, so long as I can persuade them to participate in worship, but not in service, to seek the privileges of membership, and to avoid its responsibilities, I have them in my corner! It is the *workers* that I am concerned about, the reason being that I have for a long time observed that participation and enthusiasm go hand in hand. Those who get busy and stay busy with some definite job in the church almost automatically and inevitably become interested and devoted members. But those who find reasons not to volunteer their services, or who offer excuses when asked, are soon back in my camp again!

"Fully as effective as the 'Let George do it' slogan is another which I use constantly: 'I just don't have the time.' I really go to town with that one! So long as I can keep men and women so occupied with clubs, parties, sports, and the like, as to be too busy to engage in any form of work for their church, I know they are mine — body, mind and soul — body at least! And so long as I have their bodies, why should I be concerned about your claim upon their souls?"

By this time I was wishing with all my heart that the devil would leave, but he was enjoying himself too much. After another pause, he took off again.

**"I get others to hedge on stewardship.**

"You must know" — his smile was particularly triumphant and evil here — "that your members are among the wealthiest Christians in the U.S.A. so far as their personal income is concerned. But what about the income of your church? What percentage do you figure they bring back to their church as an expression of their gratitude to God?"

As a matter of fact, I knew the answer to that one, but was too ashamed to answer. The devil seemed proud to supply the answer himself:

"Just about two and one-half per cent" he sneered. "With all your preaching about tithing, with all that Book you quote has to say about the joy of giving, the challenge of the cross, etc., your people bring back on the average one-fourth of the tithe — less than three cents out of each dollar — and you call that giving? Believe it or not, the majority of your members 'tip' four or five times more generously on a percentage basis than that!"

"I must confess there is no doubt you are winning in this area," I said, and it was impossible to conceal my sense of shame and confusion.

"Thanks for the compliment," he said. "But I find it too easy to claim much credit. I simply keep whispering to them that they cannot afford to give more. 'Think first,' I suggest, 'about your club dues, your automobile, your house furnishings, your football and baseball tickets, your clothes, your entertainment, cigarettes, liquor — there are so many things to put ahead of the church. Besides, the general public will never know how much or how little you give to the church. But the public will know and be duly impressed by the big social front you put on!"

"But God sees both," I interrupted, "and ultimately God is the One to whom all must answer! What kind of gratitude is it to put all of these other things ahead of Him and His cause?"

"That I never mention," he replied, "I just keep working on the *selfish* angle! Your so-called 'Good Book' says, 'Where a man's treasure is there will his heart be also.' To me that means that so long as a man's soul is in his pocketbook, and so long as I have my hand on his pocketbook, I have his soul too — no matter how many sermons he hears, how pious he looks, or how ardently he sings!"

"I cannot believe they are as selfish as you think," I said. "For this year I understand our church council is urging every member seriously and prayerfully to consider giving to the church at least one-half of the tithe. That is only five cents out of each dollar earned. Does that sound unreasonable?"

"Who's talking about *reason*?" he sneered. "I work on their *emotions*; as long as I can keep them thinking of themselves first, I do not have to worry about what is reasonable, what is grateful, what is spiritual, or even what is right! One-half the tithe to the church? — why, that would bring your standard of giving almost halfway up to that of the Mormon Church and the Church of the Seventh-Day Adventists! You don't think you can expect that, do you? Not so long as I, your opponent the devil, keep plugging for 'the same old amount as last year'!"

"You are mighty cocky," I said. "Are you aware that the major increase asked for this year is not for ourselves but for others?"

"No, I haven't," he answered, "but you can be sure of one thing — I'll get my word in through the side door of their conscience before they make any promises."

"I hope they throw an ink bottle at you!" I said, "as Martin Luther once did!"

"I'm not too worried," he replied. "Of course, I have to admit that there are a few in your church who do not care for me, but day in and day out I'm never more popular and influential than when your members are considering how much or how little to give to their church. As of now twenty-five percent of them are so completely within my power that they don't contribute at all. I have several hundred others down to little 'picayune amounts' compared to what they spend on themselves.

"And looking ahead, for every family you get to give one-half of their tithe — five percent of their income to their church — I will get ten to slide in far below that figure, on down to zero!

"I know, you, of course," he said, and I was relieved to see that he was rising to leave, "in spite of all I say, you are counting on the *grace of God*. But I am counting on *human selfishness!*"

And with that he was out the door and my dream was over. For once, it would seem, the devil had the last word!

But no, not at all! It is *you* who have the last word as you now decide what you intend to give to the Lord in 1961.

**Before making that decision, won't you offer this earnest prayer:**

Lay upon my heart, O God, the solemn reminder that "he that hath not the spirit of Christ is none of his." Then fill me with His blessed Spirit:

With the Spirit of dedication expressed in witness as well as in worship,

With the Spirit of surrender expressed in service as well as in devotion,

With the Spirit of compassion expressed in giving as well as in feeling.

So unite me to Christ that His life shall flow into mine, and out from mine into the world.

Grant that I, as His true disciple, may not only *believe*, but also may *belong!* In His Name, Amen.

# Evolution — with a Preacher's "Application"

*by J. K. van Baalen*

IN A PREVIOUS ARTICLE in this journal I have endeavored to point out that a large number of earlier and later Reformed theologians as well as Christian men of science have, for many decades, realized (1) that there is a vast amount of truth in the opinion that God created the universe through a process of evolution; (2) that we must carefully distinguish between many atheistic theories of evolution and some conception of evolution that recognizes God as the Creator; and (3) that the first two chapters of Genesis contain an account of the work of creation that cannot be taken as a literal description of what occurred before the creation of man in the image of God.

In this article I wish to enlarge upon these findings with special reference to the third and sixth "days," and to conclude with a preacher's "application" of wide practical importance.

### *The Third Day*

Such theologians of undoubted Reformed convictions as Professors A. Noordtzij, N. H. Ridderbos, and Meredith G. Kline have taken up a theory of creation that was already held in the ancient church by Origen and Augustine. This theory is known as "the *framework* theory" (Dutch, *kader;* German, *Rahmen*). Briefly stated, it holds that Genesis 1 and 2 use the words "six days" as "no more than a mode of presentation" (Ridderbos); or as "the imagery of an ordinary week to provide a figurative chronological framework for the account of [God's] creative acts" (Kline).

It deserves attention that both the Old and New Testaments sometimes rearrange the order of events to group them according to topics. Thus, to mention but one example from the Old and one from the New Testament, Psalm 78:12ff. mentions the water flowing from the rock and the manna in reversed order, while Matthew 4:1-11 and Luke 4:1-13 give the temptations of Christ in different order. This is called telescoping, grouping, or arranging the narrated events. And it is pointed out that this method is in use even more in the prophetic than in the historical and poetic books of the Old Testament.

Applying, then, this evidently Scriptural principle to Genesis 1 and 2, it is legitimately inferred that perhaps Moses was not even interested in giving the events of creation in strictly consecutive order. The framework was used in order to point strongly to man's duty to rest on the Sabbath inasmuch a God Himself had rested after He had girded Him self in six consecutive periods to renewed and sys tematic labor.

This conception, says Ridderbos, does away wit the awkward difficulty of taking the seventh da literally: ". . . how can the active rest of the eter nal God be fixed upon a literal day?" (*Is There Conflict Between Genesis 1 and Natural Science?* Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1957, p. 42.)

The manner, however, in which the works of cre ation have been distributed, according to this the ory, over six days, is not arbitrary. Thus the crea tion of light is narrated before that of the sun, etc to impress upon us that for light we are more de pendent upon God than upon the heavenly bodies Plants are mentioned before the sun to indicat that the sun is no more than a dispensable instru ment in the hand of God.

It is noteworthy that when this framework theor is applied to Genesis 1 and 2, that is, when we rea Genesis 1 and 2 not as an exact report of what hap pened in chronological order, but as an eightfol work of God distributed over six "days," to whic a seventh "day" of rest is added, many difficultie disappear.

For thus, first of all, we vindicate the divine in spiration and accuracy of these chapters. Only, w read them as we read other narratives in Scrip ture, rather than as a strict account of history (History, as I wrote earlier, begins with *man.*)

Secondly, we see that there need be no contras between the findings of many sciences (astronomy geology, paleontology, biology, anthropology, nu clear physics) and the Bible, because of the word "the first day," "the second day," etc.

Thirdly, we need not feel embarrassed becaus of the loose usage of the word "day" in Genesis where chapter 1 speaks of "six days" while chapte 2:5 speaks of "the day that Jehovah God mad earth and heaven."

A study by Professor Meredith G. Kline of Wes minster Theological Seminary is here importan and helpful. It is that for two reasons. The firs is that this study ("Because It Had Not Rained," i *Westminster Theological Journal,* May, 1958) do not lean upon scientific findings. Upon purely ex getical grounds the Westminster professor finc that we must conclude that Genesis 1 and 2 do n permit a theory of creation in six times twent

four hours. We have only the choice between surrendering belief in their divine inspiration or holding to the framework theory. For according to Genesis 1 all vegetation was created on the third day. But in 2:5-7 we read that there was as yet no vegetation (in the Garden at any rate) in *the day* when God created because it had not rained and because there was no man to till the soil.

This is a forceful argument. It means that "in the day" when God created, His creative work was already dependent upon the ordinary methods of providence of a later period, namely, rain and human labor.

Professor Kline goes so far as to pronounce "ludicrous" the attempt to square Genesis 1 and Genesis 2:5 if we try to adhere to days of twenty-four hours.

The second noteworthy feature of Kline's study is in his statement that if sufficient exegetical grounds were not discoverable in Genesis 1 and 2 themselves, he would not hesitate to seek light from science, and would not (as is so often done) explain away scientific facts because of an a priori exegesis of what is open to various interpretations. Says Professor Kline in his conclusion, ". . . if the exegete did not have the light of Genesis 2:5, he would certainly be justified in turning to natural revelation for possible illumination of the question left open by special revelation." And elsewhere the same Reformed scholar writes: "I am unable to accept the strictly chronological interpretation of Genesis 1 when I take account of the light of natural revelation concerning the sequence of these primordial events and try at the same time to do justice to the language of Genesis 1, especially, though not exclusively, the description of the work of the fourth day" (*Westminster Theological Journal,* Nov. 1955, p. 54).

### *The Sixth Day*

Turning now to our second example: we are undoubtedly living today in the "time of the end" of which Daniel prophesied (12:4): "Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." When, half a century ago, the writer studied at Kampen, there was available only a fraction of what is known today. Yet, even then, Dr. A. G. Honig, my professor of Dogmatics, taught that, although the days in Genesis 1 may perhaps not have been long periods, they could not well have been ordinary days, because in that case especially the sixth day would have been too crowded with events. "It is very difficult to explain how in so short a span of time as twenty-four hours everything took place that is stated in Genesis 1 and 2 to have happened on the sixth day, namely, the creation of the animals, the formation of Adam, the planting of the garden, the annunciation of the probationary command, the naming of the animals, the sleep of Adam, and the creation of Eve. It is not the intention of the Lord to tell us that the creation has been completed in exactly six times twenty-four hours but, rather, that the creation is a work of God and that it was accomplished by a six times renewed labor of God. It is this that is held before us as an example in the Sabbath command. Just as God rested after He had girded Himself six times to creative labor, so are we to rest after we have taken up labor six times. Also, God has, of course, created much more on each day than we are told of in Genesis. Thus no mention is made, e.g., of all sorts of chemical elements, of many minerals and plants, of several sorts of animals, insects, microbes, bacteria, etc. All of this, then, makes it all the more probable that we are not dealing with six ordinary days, but with creational days [*scheppingsdagen*]" (*Handboek v. d. Geref. Dogmatiek,* 1938, p. 320).

### *The Frozen Giants*

In the *Saturday Evening Post* for January 16, 1960, Ivan T. Anderson, explorer and naturalist, writes on the "Riddle of the Frozen Giants." It is, no doubt, based upon the article by Charles H. Hapgood on "The Earth's Shifting Crust" in the same magazine for January 10, 1959; and it contains a new attempt at answering the question, "What killed the huge prehistoric animals that have been found preserved in the Arctic?"

About one-seventh of the entire land surface that stretches in a great swath round the Arctic Ocean is permanently frozen. Most of this territory is covered with muck, varying in thickness from a few feet to more than 1000 feet. This muck is spread all across northern Asia, Siberia, Alaska, and Canada almost to Hudson Bay. Throughout this vast territory tens of thousands of demolished and whole giant frozen animals have been found buried in the muck, such as woolly mammoths and rhinoceroses, giant oxen, horses, tigers, bison, wolves, beavers, lions, etc. The riddle is: "Why and how did all these assorted creatures, and in such absolutely countless numbers, get killed, mashed up, and frozen into this horrific indecency?"

Mr. Anderson first disposes of some earlier theories such as (1) that "the animals fell into the ice." For the glaciers were on the slopes of mountains, whereas the dead animals are at sea level, and not in ice but in muck; (2) that the animals "fell into rivers and were deposited miles away in deltas and estuaries under layers of silt." But the animals were found frozen in plateaus far from rivers, and too high to have been pushed up from river estuaries.

The greatest conundrum was that of the Beresovka Mammoth which had quickly frozen buttercup flowers on its tongue and lips and was frozen while stepping away. Not only was it thus "quick-frozen," but it had been hurled with great force, as its broken hip indicated. Frozen-food experts have

figured that it takes a temperature of well below -150° to freeze living animals with a body temperature of 98° thus instantaneously, while keeping the meat from dehydrating. And many of these corpses still had edible meat.

Anderson's new theory, then, is that these animals were hurled away from their far more southern meadows where they were placidly munching their tons of plant food; some were smashed against the northern rocks and demolished; others were deposited *in toto* while being frozen before they knew what threw them upon the compacted northern muck. This, in his opinion, must have been the result of a sudden shifting of the crust of the earth which literally hurled these thousands of animals into space by accompanying winds of terrible velocity and gases extruding from the opened earth. "This theory is buttressed by the fact that great layers of volcanic dust have been found interlarded with the muck in Alaska."

What interests us for our present purpose is not the theory itself — though it seems plausible enough — but the fact that among these vast numbers of thousands of demolished and quick-frozen animals, hurled away from thousands of miles, no remains of men have been found. Evidently they were not there!

Now then: we might go back to the restitution theory, which speaks of a "first creation" that appeared complete from the hand (or mouth) of God, and was destroyed and thrown into chaos as a result of the fall in the world of the angels. This theory, however, has never gained favor with Reformed theologians.

The only alternative seems to be that these tens of thousands of animals of all descriptions existed over a vast area of the world and were destroyed *before man appeared upon the scene.* "Cannot," asks Dr. N. H. Ridderbos of the Free University, "the world have been very good in the eyes of God even though there were catastrophes and though there was what we humans would call cruelty?"

If anyone wants to explain all this in the "framework" of a six times twenty-four hour creation, we'd like to hear of it.

### *The Application*

Our attitude toward all of this is bound to have wide repercussions throughout our Christian educational system.

While in Mount Vernon, I had the pleasure of taking Bishop Leslie R. Marston (Free Methodist) for a walk. Three times during that walk he paused and said, "Yes, brother, I believe that God has sent your Dutch people to this country to show the rest of us Americans the principles and methods of free Christian schools."

Personally, I am of the opinion that there are three valid reasons for the separate existence of the Christian Reformed Church in America: (1) our solid insistence upon Reformed doctrine only, and all along the line; (2) our firm and uncompromising stand against church membership together with membership in secret-oath-bound lodges; (3) the Christian schools maintained by our people.

These institutions, however, must be, and must become more and more, at once *schools* and *Christian.* That is to say, accurate information must there be imparted in the light of God's Word, not error propagated under the cloak of orthodoxy.

Some thirty-five years ago the Reverend Wilbur Glenn Voliva made a laughingstock of the "Christian Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion" by proclaiming loudly that the earth is flat. Upon completion of a trip around the world he said he had made a circular tour over the flat surface of the earth. Does not the Bible speak of "the four corners of the earth"? Today photographs of the earth are taken from 850 miles above its surface, and they prove it to be global. Fortunately, Brother Voliva is beyond the smiling and the weeping.

But one would dislike to see something like this happen to our Christian schools. The Rev. A. C. Van Raalte founded Hope College "lest our people become the tail in this country."

When, therefore, textbooks such as *Story of Nations* by Rogers, Adams, and Brown (widely used in our high schools) begin the history of mankind with a gruesome and questionable portrayal of an "ugly figure" with "clawlike fingers" who "stumbled out of the cave" because this "squat hairy figure" had "suddenly become alert," the antidote is *not* in the slogan, "Do not send your child to the public school, for they teach evolution there!" The answer must be sought in something like this: Certainly, there was evolution in God's manner of making the universe. But God made man in His image and after His own likeness, with many features that came directly from the Creator, not from a brute ancestry, and not through any self-assertive boot-strap-raising efforts by a half-brute-half-man.

And so we end with the words of good old Dr. Charles Hodge, that prince of early Reformed theologians. He wrote in 1871: "The Church has been forced more than once to alter her interpretation of the Bible to accommodate the discoveries of science. But this has been done without doing any violence to the Scriptures or in any degree impairing their authority. . . . And so if it should be proved that the creation was a process continued through countless ages, and that the Bible alone of all the books on antiquity recognized that fact, then, as Professor Dana says, 'The idea of its being of human origin would become utterly incomprehensible ' " (*Systematic Theology,* I, 573).

# *The Greatest Misconception*

*by James Daane*

IN EARLIER ARTICLES I have considered G. C. Berkouwer's criticism of those deformations of God's election in which it is regarded as an arbitrary act of naked absolute power and as something which belongs to the hidden, unrevealed will of God.[1] The basic motif of Berkouwer's criticism is that these deformations are the result of dealing with God's election outside the biblically stipulated boundaries, namely, the boundaries of faith. Since I have dealt with it in other writings, I here omit Berkouwer's brilliant critique of that deformation of election in which the sovereign act of election is reduced to a principle of bare causality. In this final article I shall consider what Berkouwer calls, without intending to minimize the error and danger of the other deformations, "The Great Misconception" of election.

As do the others, the great misconception of election occurs outside the biblically prescribed boundaries of faith. Unlike the others, however, it does not occur in the area of speculation but in the area of personal religion. It is a *religious,* and not merely a speculative, misconstruction. It is therefore the greatest misconstruction of election, since the greatest sins are committed in the religious area. Just as it was the Jews rather than the Gentiles, the religious leadership of Israel rather than her harlots and publicans, who crucified our Lord, so it is at the hands of the elect rather than of the non-elect that the profoundest distortion of God's election occurs.

The great misconception of election occurs, says Berkouwer, when "man takes his election for granted so that it becomes an occasion for subtle self-justification. Election is accepted as a matter of course and it is no longer seen as truly free, sovereign, and gracious" (*Divine Election,* p. 307). Whenever men forget the gracious character of election and think about election apart from grace, the biblical doctrine of election is profoundly distorted. Election then becomes a source of proud self-awareness and self-distinction, instead of being what it truly is, an unending source of humility. "The humility which in Scripture is the correlate of election, and which is incorporated in the warning which is part of the message of God's electing act, changes into self-awareness, self-justification, and self-distinction. God's gracious and free election is obscured by man's pretentiousness. Even though election is not denied, but indeed presupposed, it no longer dominates all of man's life as being a gracious election. It becomes only the background of an arrogated human right" (p. 308).

When a man takes his election for granted, he thereby denies its gracious character, since grace as sovereign and free is something which cannot be taken for granted. It is only when election is viewed from within the context of faith's knowledge of sin and its knowledge of its undeserved redemption in Christ that the profound error of taking one's election for granted can be avoided.

The temptation to take it for granted may appear in very subtle ways. One may, for example, contemplate the eternal, unchangeable, all-inclusive counsel of God in such a way as to regard one's personal election as a matter of necessity. Once regarded as something necessary, it can then be regarded as something natural, and if natural, something we may legitimately take for granted. But God's gracious act of election is neither necessary, nor natural, nor something that may be taken for granted, precisely because it is a *gracious* act. Although the Christian knows his election as an eternal and unalterable decision of God, he may never, in any moment, regard it as something that could not be otherwise. In faith he knows that his election is wholly free, wholly unnecessary, a most unnatural and wondrous act of God's grace. He knows that it is as unnatural and unnecessary as those wondrous acts of God whereby He "justifies the ungodly" (Romans 4:5). If the Christian is a Gentile he knows how unnatural his election is, since "it is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs" (Mark 7:27). And he knows, too, that he was engrafted into the good olive tree "contrary to nature" (Romans 11:24). Through faith a Christian knows that the Lord can do with His own what He will (Luke 20:15), and that there is no premise from which conclusions may be drawn which deprive the Lord of this freedom of disposition. The Christian knows that the eternality and immutability of his election is not a thing in itself. The very eternality and immutability are an expression of grace and therefore may never be regarded as capable of depriving grace of its free character! Grace remains grace, that is, something which God is ever free to grant or withhold.

In no moment may the Christian ignore this free and gracious character of election. Though no Reformed man would, I think, disagree with this, yet how often this essential character of election has been ignored and forgotten in flights of theological speculation! When the term "election" is made to

1. Professor Berkouwer's views are set forth in his book, *Divine Election* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1960).

mean both election unto salvation and rejection unto damnation, it is plain that in the latter instance election has lost its gracious character. Similarly, when both election and reprobation are said to be the *single* starting-point for theological reflection, it is obvious that the idea of grace is not really contained in this point of departure.

In such subtle ways have academic theologian and unsophisticated believer been misled into thinking about election without thinking about grace. This is something which neither would do, nor dare to do, in their moments of prayer or worship. In such moments each instinctively knows that it would be profoundly irreligious and unchristian to thank and worship God for his election in Christ Jesus without giving a thought to the grace of God — or to his own sin. But if this be the situation, it can hardly be legitimate to separate election from grace in theological reflection.

Hence if it is unnatural in such moments of Christian experience to isolate election from grace, it is only natural that when they are isolated election is regarded as a natural thing, something which because it is unrelated to grace is taken for granted. Where this occurs, election becomes an arrogant presumption and food for self-pride.

It is only where election is regarded as gracious that it becomes a fountain of humility and a source of worship and doxology to God. For, as the Canons of Dort teach, the very certainty of our election should be something in which we find additional matter for daily humility before God.

PROFESSOR BERKOUWER discusses the great misconception as it budded in Israel and flowered in the New Testament Pharisees. His treatment is rich and suggestive as he asks whether God's election of an "us" in distinction from "others" does not produce Pharisees, that is, a separated, sectarian, and world-isolated group, a "distinctive" people which regards itself as righteous and sets all others at nought (Luke 18:9). Does not God's election of us and not others inevitably turn us into a people that becomes self-righteous, a people of imagined superior spirituality and quality, a people of spiritual introverts whose hearts are not opened outward, wanting no traffic with the world, a people which thinks and acts only in terms of "our kind of people"? Does not the knowledge that we, in distinction from others, are God's elect create the pharisaical mentality which says my church is better than other churches but chokes on the confession of Paul of being the "chief of sinners"?

This is no idle question. Who in the New Testament times on the ground of their election thought of themselves as righteous and set all others at nought and gave these "others" the special designation of "sinners"? In the days of our Lord, who, because of their election, not only would have no traffic with Gentiles but none even with their own people, with the "publicans and sinners," and ultimately were so separated even from "their own kind" that they prayed not in terms of the "us" of the Lord's Prayer but in terms of the utter aloneness of the first person singular? Who proudly chose the term "the separated ones" (which is what the word "Pharisee" means) and proudly bore it as a name? Who but the Pharisees we meet on the pages of the New Testament, a people who believed strongly in their election, in an election of an "us" in distinction from "others"?

Does election lead to Pharisaism? It does, says Berkouwer, whenever a people forgets that its election is in its very essence and character a *gracious* election. Whenever this distinctive character of election is ignored, a distinctive people becomes distinctive after the manner of the Pharisees, and, indeed, cannot be distinguished from them. Severed from grace, the elected "us" becomes a divisive, sectarian group characterized by self-awareness, vainglory, and proud self-distinctiveness. The "us" develops a religious distinctiveness which adheres in the self rather than in the fact that the self is the object of God's gracious election, a distinctiveness which therefore sets not only the ungodly, but also *all* others at nought (Luke 18:9). Indeed the very people who set our Lord at nought stood under His cross and justified His crucifixion by appealing to election, declaring that Christ was not God's elect (Matthew 27:43, Luke 23:35). Berkouwer is quite in the right when he asserts, "The conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees was ultimately a conflict concerning the gracious election of God" (p. 318). When religious people forget the gracious character of their election they become kin to the Pharisees, able to crucify others, and, like them, able to justify their action.

Berkouwer speaks to the issue when he warns: "The danger is not imaginary that we see Pharisaism merely as a local phenomenon, limited to the Jews of Jesus' time. But the very nature of the misconception of the electing grace of God indicates that the opposite is true. In Pharisaism we meet far more than simply that hypocrisy which in the Church has been designated with the simple term 'Pharisaism.' Rather, we are dealing with that resistance against gracious election which is identical to the resistance against the foolishness of the cross. It is that form of religion which boasts an extensive insight into covenant and law, but which has not understood the depth of the covenant and the fulfillment of the law. The result of this misunderstanding is false self-exaltation — even in prayer — which in turn results in blindness concerning God and one's neighbor, and which creates its own antithesis regarding the multitude that knows not the law and therefore is accursed (John 7:49)" (pp. 318, 319).

God's election does indeed, says Berkouwer, create an "us" distinctive from "others," a people of God, "a peculiar people." But their "distinctiveness" is that which stems from grace. This people of God may never forget that its uniqueness and its difference from others stems from the free grace of God, a grace so free that it may turn from a Jewish people to heathen Gentiles, to those who once were "no people" and are not "my people." No ideas about an eternal, unchangeable, and necessary election, no take-it-for-granted attitude may deny the possibility of Jewish branches being cut off, nor the possibility of engrafted Gentile branches being cut off. For if God can cut off the natural branches, how much more those that were engrafted contrary to nature!

THERE IS INDEED an antithesis between "us" and the "others," between the Church and the world. But we may not, as did the Pharisees on the basis of their deformed notion of election, create our own, or caricature the biblical antithesis. "This antithesis would never have been denied or made relative (for Scripture speaks quite plainly here), if it had not been for the many caricatures of it by presumptuous men" (p. 323). Berkouwer refers to the horrible caricatures of the antithesis against which Augustine, Luther, and Calvin have warned us. The Bible warns us, says Berkouwer, "that the antithesis must be correctly understood as being legitimate only by virtue of the grace of election. Precisely here we are confronted with the real touchstone of the antithesis in the world. . . . This struggle is of an altogether different nature than when two persons are engaged in a battle of life and death. For in the antithesis, because of the offense of the cross, there is always the possibility of reconciliation . . . just as the gulf between Jews and Gentiles is bridged in Christ. . ." (pp. 324, 325).

The Pharisees created "a sharp but false antithesis between themselves and the people that knew not the law." It was "a legalistic or moralistic antithesis," detached from God's activity as a whole, and one which therefore misconstrued the divinely intended antithesis between Israel and the nations, in which in Israel is contained a blessing for all the nations. The true biblical antithesis is not indicated by the hostilities that exist between evil men, nor by pointing to the fact that man by nature is prone to hate God and his neighbor. The biblical antithesis is related to grace and can be rightly understood only in connection with it. It carries an "absolute Christological character and mark, as Christ Himself calls out at the crossroads of all decisions: 'He that is not with me is against me' . . . . The *skandalon* lies in His cross" (p. 323). Because it lies in the cross it is not absolute in the sense that no reconciliation is possible; indeed, this possibility was actualized, according to Paul, when the antithesis between Jews and Gentiles was resolved through the blood of the cross (Ephesians 2).

The antithesis of a static, ever-the-same, never-to-be-resolved, eternal conflict between good and evil, God and the devil — one which has often been militantly proclaimed in the Reformed religious community — is of our own creation. It is essentially pagan and has been forged by pagans in pre-Christian times. It bears no relationship to the cross of Christ and therefore contains no echo of redemption. This static, non-historical concept of the antithesis is essentially a denial of the cross of Christ; it would be valid only if there were no cross. This abstract conception of the antithesis stands unrelated to God's grace; it recognizes no termination, no victory, for it stands unrelated to the place where reconciliation is possible.

"The point at issue in the antithesis which is redemptive-historically concentrated in the *skandalon* of the cross is not a contrast of man's natural heart. What is meant is not the kind of breach which came between Cain and Abel, or any quarrel or hatred caused by egotism. Rather, in the antithesis we are confronted with a truly unique contrast. This uniqueness finds its origin in God's mercy, and that is the reason why it finds its true expression not in isolation from the world, but in turning toward the world. Therein the Church resembles its heavenly Father, who makes His sun to rise on the evil and the good alike (Matthew 5:45)" (p. 327).

Whenever election is defined as eternal but without reference to grace, and thus defined in reference to an abstract eternality, the biblical idea of the antithesis suffers a similar fate. It, too, becomes abstractly eternal, beyond the reach of the power and determination of the cross of Christ.

I CONCLUDE this series of discussions based on Professor Berkouwer's book with a quotation:

"The doctrine of God's election is truly not without reason called the heart of the Church. This doctrine has often been mutilated and speculatively interpreted to the detriment of many. . . . We shall have to realize that many threatening dangers surround this 'heart' of the Church. Precisely when there are misrepresentations, then there is the danger of the vehement reaction. . . . Often the pendulum has swung from determinism to indeterminism, from the arbitrariness concept to the denial of divine sovereignty. . . . All this reveals the estrangement of man's thinking, which no longer understands that both God's sovereignty and His grace, both His love and His justice, go together. The way back is not a way of rational transparency. . . . but is found only when man walks in the way of this truth. . . . Only thus will it be possible to get rid of the complexities with which our thinking has obscured the doctrine of election" (p. 329).

# Calvin on Union with Christ

*by William K. Stob*

ONE OF THE more popular misconceptions regarding Calvin and his teachings is the idea that he is a cold, insensitive, abstractly logical theologian, and little more. Miss Harkness, for example, thinks that "his writings lack the note of warm, personal fellowship with Christ." This, however, is a superficial and essentially erroneous judgment. Calvin's writings reveal that he was a very warmhearted Christian, one who cherished and enjoyed personal fellowship with his Lord. It may be said, indeed, that union with Christ is at the very heart of Calvin's thought and life.

This article attempts to supply only a fraction of the evidence capable of establishing this thesis. What is offered will at least indicate the great importance attached in every branch of Calvin's theology to the Christian's union with Christ.

### *Election*

In a sermon on II Timothy 1:9, 10, Calvin says: "We must always come to our Lord Jesus Christ, when we talk of our election; for without Him (as we have already shown) we cannot come nigh to God. When we talk of His decree, well may we be astonished, as men worthy of death. But if Jesus Christ be our guide, we may with cheerfulness depend upon Him; knowing that He hath worthiness enough in Him to make all His members beloved of God the Father; it being sufficient for us that we are grafted into His body, and made *one with Him.*"[1] It is easy to see that for Calvin election is only *in Christ* and that for this doctrine to be a blessing for us we must be in Christ, grafted into His body.

Because we are united with Christ, election serves as a most comforting and assuring doctrine; for our salvation is not grounded in ourselves but in the everlasting counsel of God and executed in Christ Jesus. In his sermon entitled, "The Sure Foundation," based on II Timothy 2:19, Calvin remarks: "But St. Paul lifted us up higher, saying all that is given us is because God has chosen us before the world began; because He loved us in our Lord Jesus Christ before we could do either good or evil. This is what we shall now notice: namely, although God draweth us to Him by the gospel, and we by faith receive the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the cause of our salvation, yet notwithstanding, there was a secret love of God that went before: yea, though it were hid from us, though God made no great haste in drawing us to Him, yet it is certain that we were chosen. This is what St. Paul aimeth at in the sentence before us, to wit, 'the foundation of God standeth sure.'"[2] Salvation is ours; election is wonderful and comforting since, "He loved us in our Lord Jesus Christ."

Furthermore, says Calvin, Satan can never snatch us away when we are in Christ: "Jesus Christ hath taken charge of our souls, and will not suffer us to be taken out of His hands. Although the devil may do what he can, though he use ever so many means, although it may seem a hundred thousand times as though we should be taken by violence out of the hands of our Lord Jesus Christ, yet notwithstanding, we shall remain there forever. And why so? Because our salvation is settled upon the election of God and His unchangeable counsel."[3] Election and union with Christ go together in Calvin.

### *Incarnation*

Union with Christ and the fact of Christ's incarnation is so profusely commented on in Calvin's sermons that it would be tedious to cite every reference. The very explanation of the incarnation is found in the fact that to save us Christ became one of us. He joined us by assuming our human nature while yet remaining God. This is an instance of Christ's union with us — to save us He became one of us. Says Calvin: "God abased Himself in such a manner, that He took upon Himself our flesh, so that we have become His brethren. Who is the Lord of glory, that He should so humble Himself to be joined to us, and take upon Him the form of a servant, even to suffer the curse that was due to us?"[4] It is interesting to note, incidentally, that Calvin repeatedly speaks of Jesus as our "brother" — a term which we have all but surrendered to the modernists of our day, although it is plain to see that they do not mean by it what Calvin did.

Calvin continues to muse about this marvelous mystery of the faith: "Why doth St. Paul call this a mystery of faith, that Jesus, who is God everlastingly, was manifest in the flesh? It is as much as if he should say, when we are gathered to God, and made one body with the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall behold the end for which we were made; to wit, that we might know that God is joined and made one with us in the person of His Son."[5] Satan tries his best to confuse things by prompting men to deny the humanity or the deity of Christ but God continues to make the issue clear to His people. Calvin emphasizes the absolute necessity of recognizing Jesus as both true God and true man in order that we may be united with Him and our sal-

1. John Calvin, *The Mystery of Godliness*, p. 45.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 87.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 88.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

vation be accomplished.

In a sermon on Luke 2:1-14, "The Nativity of Jesus Christ," Calvin says: "We know that it is our good, our joy and rest to be united with the Son of God. As He is our Head, we are His body, so also from Him we hold our life and our salvation and all good"[6]; and, "Now we see the summary of this history. That is, in the first place, we know that the Son of God, even our Mediator, has united Himself to us in such a way that we must never doubt that we are sharers both of His life and of all His riches."[7] Because of the incarnation Christ is united to us and a host of spiritual benefits accrue to us. Calvin repeatedly asserts this. Therefore, as one might expect, the incarnation is of great power and import in Calvin's thinking, and well might it be. Without the incarnation there is *no* unity with Christ as our Redeemer.

### *Crucifixion*

In the beautiful collection of "Sermons on Isaiah's Prophecy" Calvin engages in a lengthy discussion of the death and passion of Christ. These sermons furnish the reader with a fresh insight into the agonies of our Lord and His mediatorial work on our behalf. Christ is spoken of as our High Priest, the Servant of God, our Substitute, our Mediator, and the like. This saving work of Christ is, of course, done on behalf of God's elect and therefore union with Christ or union of Christ with the believer is of the utmost importance. How are we saved by Him, asks Calvin? "He hath been made a curse for us — and that not only before men, but even at the mouth of God His Father."[8] Because He is united with us, our curse becomes His, our punishment is born by the Saviour. It is not strange that we find Him disfigured — He is bearing our condemnation. God "did not look upon the righteousness, integrity and perfection that was in Jesus Christ; but rather took Him as being there in the place of sinners. So we see that Jesus Christ was laden with all our sins and iniquities; not at all because He was guilty of them but because He was willing for them all to be imputed to Himself to render account for them and make the payment."[9] What a Saviour we have in Jesus, for He "was not only condemned by Pilate, an earthly judge, that we might be absolved before God His Father; He was not only crucified, that we might be delivered from the curse; He not only endured death that we might be set free from it; but also that today we may have peace in our consciences and may rejoice, feeling the Fatherly love of God and calling upon Him confidently, having assurance that He will receive us and that we shall be pleasing to Him."[10]

6. Leroy Nixon, *The Deity of Christ*, p. 35.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 38.
8. Parker, T. H., *Sermons on Isaic Prophecy by Calvin*, p. 34.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 70.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 124.

All this is ours because Christ united Himself with us and because by faith we are united with Him. He is our Substitute, our Mediator, our High Priest. In Him we have salvation.

### *Resurrection*

Union with Christ also benefits us with regard to the resurrection, for the resurrection had importance not only for Christ but also for us, His brothers. "Let us recognize," says Calvin, "that today we share in the righteousness which we have in our Lord Jesus Christ, to reach the heavenly glory, since He does not wish to be separated from us."[11] Calvin, at some length, explains the brotherly relationship that existed between Christ and His disciples. This same relationship exists between Christ and all true believers. In this term "brother" Christ teaches that He shares His benefits with us, which benefits apply also to the resurrection. He, as our brother, does not think of leaving us behind. His resurrection has direct relationship to ours: our union with Him makes possible our resurrection. This entire discussion takes place in Calvin's sermon on "The Resurrection of Jesus Christ" — (Matt. 28:1-10).

### *Ascension*

But we are not united with Christ only in resurrection but also in ascension. In fact, the two go together for, says says Calvin," Whenever we wish to have certainty of our faith, we must not come to any creatures, but we must behold as in a mirror, that just as Jesus Christ was raised and conquered death, He opened heaven in order for us to enter by His leading."[12] We become members of His Kingdom by believing the gospel. But this is only an entrance into the Kingdom and a unity with Him — "we must follow further, until we are fully united to Jesus Christ."[13] This is accomplished when we, like Christ, ascend to the heavenly Kingdom. For "we are admonished to march forward until God is to us all in all: namely, that He fills us so with Himself that we are emptied of ourselves, even that we are divested of this body, and that we are raised in this glory which He has promised us."[14] This is real and perfect unity with Christ.

Perhaps one of Calvin's clearest and most concise statements regarding the relation between Christ's ascension and our union with Him may be found in these words: ". . . let us note that Jesus Christ, being so exalted by God that all creatures are put in subjection to Him, is however our Head, and that this great dominion and empire which He has profits us, indeed, if we are His members. But He cannot be our Head unless we have true union with Him. This, then, is wherein consists all the assurance of our salvation. It is, that since Jesus, hav-

11. Leroy Nixon, *op. cit.*, p. 193.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 199.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 202.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 202.

ing ascended on high, has dominion over everything, indeed, so that even the angels are subject to Him, they and all creatures will serve us by that token."[15]

*Session*

We are furthermore united with Christ in His session at the right hand of the Father, for, observes Calvin, "since He is there, He is our Intercessor and presents our prayers there and causes us to be answered, as if we had the privilege of saying what we have to do and to pour out our heart before God. . . . Since Jesus Christ has entered into heaven and He hears us there, although we are only brute beasts, and also bears our names before God to show that He has us in His heart; we need not pray to God in doubt, but we may be assured that our prayers will always be acceptable to Him, since we pray through Jesus Christ."[16]

*Second Coming*

Still further, Calvin sees a beautiful comfort in our union with Christ and the Second Coming. "We have said that the angels had promised to the apostles, that although they had seen Him ascend into heaven, He would come back. Of what profit would it be to us that He has descended to suffer death and passion, if we had no hope of ever seeing Him again? But when we have the promise that He must come back to gather us and to unite us to Himself, that is wherein we ought to be consoled."[17] Or again, "Let us be consoled if today we endure much pain, and let us wait for the day of God on which the Lord Jesus has promised to come in order to unite us to Himself."[18] But not only is this a comforting thought but a glorious thought, for "St. Paul declares that our Lord Jesus is not coming to keep His glory to Himself alone, but that it may be poured out upon all the members of His body."[19]

*Sacraments*

In several of Calvin's sermons, particularly in the volume, *The Deity of Christ,* he develops the idea of union with Christ and the sacraments.

Calvin sees the union with Christ pictured most beautifully in the Lord's Supper. Speaking no doubt at a communion service, we find him saying, "He shows a special consideration in this table which is set for us here, for it is to show us that we are brothers of our Lord Jesus Christ, that is to say that as He united us to Himself (as He says in the 17th chapter of St. John), He has also united us to God His Father, and fully declares to us that He is our meat and drink, that we are fed with His own substance to have all our spiritual life in Him. And that is more than if it would be if He called us His brothers a hundred times. So then, let us realize the unity that we have with our Lord Jesus Christ . . . that He so works by the power of His Holy Spirit that we are united to Him more than are the members of a body."[20] At another communion service he sounds a similar note: "He presents Himself to us and lives with us in such a manner that everything that is His belongs to us, and we enjoy the benefits which have been given to Him in our name . . . when we come to this holy table, let us recognize that it is a secret which surpasses all our senses, and yet we must here give place to faith. Let us know that what cannot be conceived of by men is accomplished, nevertheless, by the secret and invisible grace of the Holy Spirit; for this is how we are made partakers of the body and of the blood of Jesus Christ."[21]

R. S. Wallace has made a significant contribution toward a better understanding of Calvin and the sacraments in his worthwhile book, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacraments.* Information gleaned from this book as well as from Calvin's *Institutes* confirms what Calvin touches on in his sermons. It is undeniably clear that if we should ask Calvin, "What aspect of the Gospel do the sacraments chiefly bring before our eyes?" he would answer, "Our mystical union with the body of Christ." Here is the real beauty of the Lord's Supper for Calvin — we as partakers of the Lord Jesus Christ are made one with Him, to dwell in Him and He in us. Very strikingly we find that same concept in the "Form for the Lord's Supper" used in Reformed churches.

The nature of this union, however, Calvin would be quick to say, is a spiritual mystery, incomprehensible to the natural mind. Therefore the sacraments were appointed by God to depict visibly this mystery. Calvin remarks: "When we come to this holy table, we must know that our Lord Jesus Christ presents Himself to confirm us in the unity which we have already received by the faith of the Gospel, that we may be grafted into His body in such a manner that He will dwell in us and we in Him."[22] Christ in His life, His death and His resurrection performed everything necessary for our salvation. To participate in the blessings He earned we must enter into a *personal* communion with Him. Calvin insists that all that Christ has done for us is of no avail to us until we become one with Him. Therefore in the Lord's Supper we must actually come into a real union with Christ.

The Lord's Supper, then, is a sign of our incorporation in the body of Christ. "The signs are bread and wine which represent the invisible food which we receive from the body and blood of Christ. For as God, regenerating us in Baptism, ingrafts us into the fellowship of the Church, and makes us

15. *Ibid.*, p. 206.
16. *Ibid.*, pp. 236, 237.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 240.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 242.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 299.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 195.
21. *Ibid.*, pp. 254, 255.
22. R. S. Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacraments*, p. 144.

His by adoption, so . . . He performs the office of a provident parent in continually supplying the food by which He may sustain and preserve us in the life to which He has begotten us by His Word."[23] In some mysterious sense we are really united with the body and blood of Christ.

The Holy Spirit plays a most essential and important role in applying the Lord's Supper to the believer. His workings are mysterious but yet are sure, for, says Calvin, "Though it seems an incredible thing that the flesh of Christ, while at such a distance from us in respect of space, should be food for us, let us remember how far the secret virtue of the Holy Spirit surpasses all our conceptions, and how foolish it is to wish to measure its immensity by our feeble capacity. Therefore what our mind does not comprehend let faith conceive, viz. that the Spirit really unites things separated by space,"[24] or as he puts it elsewhere, "The sacraments duly perform their office only when accompanied by the Spirit, the internal master, whose energy alone penetrates the heart, stirs up the affections, and procures access for the sacraments into our souls. If he is wanting, the sacraments can avail us no more than the sun shining on the eyeballs of the blind, or sounds uttered in the ears of the deaf."[25] No inherent magical power resides in the Lord's Supper. Only the Holy Spirit can make it to be of any blessing.

Regarding the sacrament of Baptism, Calvin says very precisely in a sermon on Acts 1:4, 5: "The principal thing that we have with respect to Baptism consists in two points: it is that we are stripped of the old Adam and renewed and united to Jesus Christ, and that we are purged of all our spots when God pardons us of our sins. That is the sum of Baptism."

* * * *

From the quotations here adduced it is clear that the doctrine of union with Christ is of the essence of Calvin's preaching and teaching.

23. *Institutes*, 4:17:1.
24. *Institutes*, 4:17:10.
25. *Institutes*, 4:14:9.

# John Post

*by J. G. Vanden Bosch*

OUR EARLY LEADERS were for the most part men of lowly origin. The description that the Apostle Paul gives of members of the Corinthian Church that there were not many wise, not many mighty, not many noble among them certainly was also true of those who came to America and espoused the movement of 1857. To write their history is to record "the short and simple annals of the poor." To look among these hard-working pioneers for a vital interest in higher education and the advanced forms of culture is contrary to what might reasonably be expected of them. Making a livelihood by carving farms out of dense forests demanded every ounce of their energy and tended to choke the aspirations of breasts "pregnant with celestial fire." The early settlers, however, were a deeply religious folk, and occasionally there was among them one who could not stifle the desire to serve God in the ministry and in whom obstacles could not "repress the noble rage." This was the case with John Post, the young farmer, who became a highly respected minister of the Gospel.

John Post was born April 15, 1850, at Wirdum, a hamlet near Garrelsweer, in the province of Groningen, the Netherlands. He was the son of a carpenter who owned a small patch of land and was a man of only moderate means. It was John's inestimable privilege to be born into a rich spiritual heritage, for he had God-fearing parents who were not remiss in bringing up their children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," and who belonged to the Secession movement of 1834. With an eye to the superior advantages America was reputed to offer to growing families, the parents decided to pull up stakes and to exchange their home in the Old World for one in the New. Accordingly, in the year 1867 the Post family came to this country and settled in the still sparsely populated woodlands of Allendale, in an area just across the Grand River from Lamont. Inasmuch as this was an English settlement, the English language was the chief means of communication. This was of great advantage to the seventeen-year-old John, for he learned to speak English fluently and he came to know through association with the neighbors something of what has vaguely been called the American way of life. Later when he was an ordained minister and the need of the hour called for it, he was able to preach in the language of his adopted country, and he did so acceptably.

From his seventeenth to his twenty-fifth year John Post lived with his parents on the farm, finding occasional employment in a sawmill. He was a serious young man for whom religion meant much. From earliest youth he had been concerned about his salvation and made this a matter of prayer. He enjoyed catechetical instruction, attendance at worship service, and took delight in listening to the conver-

sation of the children of God as they spoke about salvation experienced and other sacred themes. His interest in spiritual matters soon ripened, even while he was young, into a strong desire to become a minister of the Gospel, which his natural diffidence caused him to keep to himself. There was no organized church of the Reformed persuasion in the immediate neighborhood; nevertheless, the parents did not allow the spiritual life of the family to decline for lack of nourishment, and John's desire did not perish. Though it did not leave him, he evidently concluded that insurmountable obstacles did not allow his ambition to be attained. So at the age of twenty-five he married and settled on a farm.

The young farmer's wedded bliss was of short duration. At the end of a year his youthful wife died. This bitter experience, however, wrought rich spiritual gain. Convinced that his old desire should no longer be ignored, he deemed his future course to be marked out for him. By letter and in person he sought the advice of Professor G. E. Boer, from whom he received strong encouragement. He disposed of his farm, and, having been accepted as a student for a probationary period, he enrolled as a student at the Theological School at Grand Rapids.

Thus at twenty-six years of age the young widower began his study for the ministry. This was in 1876, the year of the founding of the Theological School. He was one of the first to follow the entire prescribed course. The five years of study which confronted him, three years literary and two years theological, did not dismay him. Difficult it may have been for him to adjust himself to the regimen of student life; nevertheless he enjoyed his studies and worked diligently at his academic task. The one matter that at first discouraged him and made him hesitate to continue was his fear, because of his natural diffidence, to speak in public, but this fear he overcame. In 1881, having finished his entire course, he passed his final examination and, together with Henry Bode, Peter Schut, and Hermanus Tempel, was declared eligible for a call.

That a class of four was graduated in 1881 was cause for rejoicing. When in 1875 elder Johannes Gezon was a delegate to the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church in the Netherlands, he reported that the denomination he represented numbered forty churches, half of which were shepherdless. There was an increase not only in the number of churches, but also in the number of students for the ministry. Thus far the Theological School had graduated classes of only one or two, two years it had had no graduates, but now there were four men ready to enter the ranks of the ministry. God was blessing the school and the churches supporting it.

Of the four calls Mr. Post received he considered the call from the East Street Church, now Eastern Avenue, of Grand Rapids, the most urgent, and he accepted it. He was ordained and installed by Professor G. E. Boer, whom he always held in high esteem, assisted by Rev. W. H. Van Leeuwen. For his inaugural he chose as his text 2 Thessalonians 3:1, "Brethren, pray for us that the Word of the Lord may run and be glorified." Standing at the threshold of his career as a minister of the Word, he keenly was aware of his own insufficiency and felt the need of the prayers of God's people, as he did throughout his entire life. If his labors bore fruit, he did not hesitate to honor the prayers of his parishioners as an effective influence.

Fresh from the seminary and without experience though he was, the Lord richly blessed his labors. The heavy influx of immigrants caused the congregation to grow rapidly. At the beginning of his pastorate Rev. J. Post ministered to sixty, after five years to two hundred twenty families. The church edifice had to be enlarged to twice its original size. He was loved by his people so that in later years he often made mention of his strong attachment to members of his first charge. In his ministry he was nobly assisted by his wife, the oldest daughter of Rev. R. T. Kuiper of Graafschap, whom he married a few months after his installation. Her ability to teach was highly appreciated. However, not being as strong physically as he was in later life, he found the spiritual care of 1100 souls a burden he could no longer carry without detriment to his health. When a repeated call from the church at Spring Lake came, he deemed it best to accept.

At Spring Lake Rev. J. Post was installed by his predecessor, Rev. Peter Ekster. This parish being much smaller than his previous one, life was less strenuous. The four years spent in this church, partly village and partly rural, were profitable years both for himself and his people. A new parsonage was built. But a call from the church at Kalamazoo was so urgent that he could not lay it aside. In this larger field there was much to be done. What must have tested his tact as a wise shepherd was the difficult times experienced during the panic of 1893, when many church members were unemployed and income was lamentably low.

Next the Rev. Mr. Post served a number of rural churches. Having labored in Kalamazoo five years, he assumed the pastorate of the combined churches at Lamont and Eastmanville, two spots on the Grand River, beautiful for situation. In this vicinity he had spent his young days so that he now ministered to the spiritual needs of some of his old friends and neighbors and proved himself to be an exception to the rule that a prophet is not without honor except in his own country. Niekerk, Jamestown, Spring Lake for the second time, and Cutlerville, in the order named, were next the scenes of his labors. During the six years of his ministry at Cutlerville a new church edifice was erected. Since in this place, so near Grand Rapids and yet outside it, he wished to spend the remaining days of his life, he here built a home of his own. Advancing years

made him realize that regular congregational work was beginning to be somewhat difficult and retirement was contemplated.

However, in 1920, having spent thirty-nine years in the ministry, he was offered the position of spiritual adviser at the Christian Psychopathic Hospital. The letter conveying the notice of his appointment stipulated that he was expected to deliver four brief addresses, two in Dutch and two in English, every Sunday; visit each patient once every fortnight; teach a class of nurses three times a week; and from time to time in newspapers and otherwise acquaint the public with the work and needs of the institution. Though he was aware of some abatement of his natural vigor, he felt strong enough to meet these requirements. To adapt his preaching and his personal approaches to the needs of the mentally afflicted was perhaps the most difficult labor he ever undertook, but he performed his task with zeal and devotion and was happy to close his career with activities in this institution of mercy.

Rev. Post's life was suddenly ended by a tragic death. At the close of a day in the month of January 1928, as he was crossing the road on his way home from his work, he was struck by a passing automobile and he died a few hours later as the result of a fractured skull. Instead of preaching the following Lord's day the sermons he had already prepared, he was with the saints in glory. The eight years he spent at the hospital were fruitful years. Many a one allowed to return home cured spoke with gratitude of the spiritual blessings received through his ministry.

It was thought fitting to hold the funeral services in the church he first served, but because its building was being repaired, the last rites were observed in the Neland Avenue Church. The consistory of Eastern Avenue, however, out of respect for its first pastor planned a memorial service at which Rev. W. P. Wyk spoke on the comforting words uttered by Jesus, "In my Father's house are many mansions." Rev. John Post's remains were interred in the cemetery at Lamont, where three of his children were buried.

The widow did not live long to lament the sudden end of more than forty-six years of a happy union. Within a year she joined her husband in the realms above, leaving four children to mourn the loss of their parents, three daughters and one son. The oldest daughter became the wife of Rev. Martin M. Schans; another daughter is the widow of Walter De Leeuw; a third daughter died unmarried; and the son, E. R. Post, is principal of the Grand Rapids Christian High School.

To Rev. John Post belongs the distinction of having served his Lord in the ministry more than forty-six years. Occasionally there is one who is permitted to spend even a longer period in active service. Thus Rev. S. J. Hulst when he wrote an account of his life glorified his Lord by entitling the book *Sixty-Three Years a Preacher.* But the privilege of so long a tenure of service is enjoyed only by a few. Statistics show that the average length of active service of ministers in the Christian Reformed denomination is much briefer. Rev. John Post never knew the pleasures and the disappointments of some years of emeritation. Almost up to the hour of his death he was engaged in the work of the Lord.

Rev. John Post did not seek immortality by leaving behind much printed material, though he was not averse to using his pen freely when he was at work in his study. Modestly he considered himself only a preacher of the gospel of salvation and a pastor. Upon his sermons which he wrote out he bestowed much care, keeping in mind that he must bring a message based on God's Word and one that satisfied the spiritual needs of his people. And what a faithful pastor he was. He knew the members of his own flock, and, if any were not in their pew on Sunday, he was sure to visit them during the week. In his sermon commemorating the twenty-fifth anniversary of his ordination he declared that it had always been a holy compulsion to proclaim the gospel of free grace and that he hoped to proclaim this gospel to the end of his days.

It is noteworthy that the Rev. Mr. Post shepherded for the most part rural churches or churches largely so, for which he had a decided preference. Some preachers seem to need the inspiration that comes from addressing the massive audiences of large city churches and the stimulation furnished by the numerous activities in a congregation having many members. Others think that they are at their best when they perform the duties of their sacred calling amid quiet rural scenes. The audience may not be so large, but the pressure of congregational activities is not so exhausting. Rev. John Post considered himself to belong to this group. Never again did he assume the pastorate of a church as vast as was East Street when he left it.

Rev. John Post was a man in whom several Christian traits were unostentatiously exemplified. Men esteemed him for his modesty which was as natural to him as breathing. Even when he was honored with important denominational functions such as membership in the Board of Trustees of the Theological School or in the Board of Missions, he remained the humble man that he was. All who knew him testified that he adorned the doctrine of God, his Saviour, with a modesty and a seriousness that is becoming a minister of the gospel. Frivolity he eschewed. This seriousness or earnestness was part and parcel of the quiet dignity that characterized this man of God and he was a man who loved peace. Trouble of any kind in a congregation he could ill endure, and through his efforts the causes of ill will were removed and peace and harmony were re-

stored.

As was the man, so was his influence in his day, quiet but effective. Endowed with a noble character, Rev. John Post humbly and faithfully serve the denomination he loved so that the memory o the man and his work deserve lasting recognition.

# None Except Reformed

*by Leonard Verduin*

THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH practices what is known as "close communion." Although the practice is, presumably, common to the entire Church, it can hardly be said that there is a consensus as to just what the term "close communion" is supposed to mean.

There seem to be two traditions as to the meaning of the term. On the one hand one hears it said that "close communion" means that no one is given access to the Lord's table unless the Board of Control (in this case, the consistory, or, as some are beginning to label that body, the council) gives him the green light. In this view "close communion" means that over and above the self-examination of the prospective participant there is to be a second judgment passed as to one's fitness, the judgment of the Board of Control.

But one also encounters a somewhat different conception as to what "close communion" means. One also hears it said that it means simply that the Sacrament is made available to Christian Reformed people and to none other. In this view "close communion" means, specifically, that no Baptist, for example, or Lutheran, is to be given permission to participate.

This latter construction of the meaning of "close communion" is then supported with a reference to Article 61 of the Church Order that governs Christian Reformed Churches, the Article that reads: "None shall be admitted to the Lord's Supper except those who . . . have made a confession of the Reformed religion . . . ." This Article, it is said, precludes and excludes Baptists, Lutherans, Methodists, etc.

We wish in this paper to submit evidence that the word "Reformed" as used in said Article may very well mean no more than "Protestant," that it was not meant as a correlative of, let us say, "Baptist" or "Methodist." In that case Article 61 can hardly be said to sustain the weight hung on it. If in the days in which Article 61 was coming into being the word "Reformed" was merely synonymous with "Protestant," then it will hardly do to read it today as though it connoted "non-Lutheran," "non-Baptist," etc.

What says the record?

IN THE YEAR 1562, to begin with, Theodor Beza, Calvin's successor at Geneva, in a letter addressed to Catherine de Medici, spoke of "all the reforme Churches of this Kingdom and, we hope, not les of those outside, that is to say, of the Churches o England, Scotland, Denmark, Sweden, Germany Poland, Switzerland and the Grisons." It is appar ent that in some of the areas listed by Beza ther were no Reformed churches, only reformed ones (It is not without significance that Beza wrot the word "reformed" without capitalizing it; thi goes far to show that he was not thinking of wha we now call a "denomination.") In some of th countries listed there were only Lutheran churches Yet Beza calls them all alike "reformed Churches." Apparently he meant by "reformed" what we toda mean when we say "Protestant."

In the prefatory statement introducing the Form of Concord of the Lutheran Churches it is stated "Our Reformed Churches have been separate from the papist and other dissolute sects and here sies." Here the churches of the Lutheran wing o the Reformation are called "Reformed Churches." Here also the word "Reformed" is the equivalen of "Protestant."

The Form of Concord of the Lutherans itsel speaks of "*unsere reformirte Kirche*," our Reforme Church. Here also the word "Reformed" is no used as a correlative of "Lutheran" but simply as a convenient term for those churches that had under gone the benefit of the Protestant Reformation.

In the year 1576 certain theologians of the Lu theran areas about Lübeck, Hamburg, and Lüneberg spoke of their doctrines as doctrines held "from the inception of the Reformed religion" (*vom An fange der reformirten Religion an*). Here the word "Reformed" is meant in a way that includes the Lutherans; it is here also quite synonymous with what we today would call "Protestant."

In the early seventieth century a German theolo gian, himself a vehement opponent of Calvinistic thought, Leonhard Hutter, at that time professor at the University of Wittenberg, addressed himself to the German churches calling them "truly re formed" (*vere reformatis*). If in this man's usage "Reformed" had stood for anything else than "Prot estant" he would have avoided it as a designation of his own communion.

The theologian Calixtus, who flourished in the early seventeenth century, commonly used the word

"Reformed" in the broad sense of "Protestant." In fact, he equated the two words, speaking of "Protestant or Reformed" (*qui Protestantes vel Reformati dicimur*). At another place this theologian uses the word "Reformed" as an antonym of "Catholic," saying: "This disputation cannot take place without damaging the Reformed Churches and benefitting the Papists," (*Diese disputation kann ohne Nachteil der reformirten Kirchen und Vorteil der Papisten nicht eingestelt werden.*")

Another responsible person, Johannes Winckelman, professor at Marburg and an ardent Lutheran, wrote, in an assault upon the Catholics: "We are not a new Church, but rather a reformed one" (*wir sind keine neue, sondern eine reformirte Kirche*). For this man, too, "Reformed" had the meaning of "Protestant."

IT WOULD NOT BE at all difficult to lengthen this witness to establish the thesis that in the society in which Article 61 was born the word "Reformed" frequently had the broad meaning of "Protestant" and was an expression intended to include all who stood in the tradition of the Protestant Reformation. It could also be shown that the word "Reformed" was used prior to 1517 and at that time denoted a person who held that the ancestral Church was a fallen creature which had to be regenerated. But all this would perhaps only tire the reader.

It would serve our present purpose better to point out that on the face of it, it is an anachronism to read the word "Reformed as it stands in said Article as though it had the meaning then which the word has come to have in our times. It must not be forgotten that the phenomenon, so much a part of the ecclesiastical landscape in our times, of the pluriformity of the Churches was as yet not an accepted fact in the days in which Article 61 was being composed; the idea and the ideal of a single Church purged of the medieval accretion of error was still hoped for and expected. In those times any person or group of persons that shared the vision that the true Church was the Church cleansed of this accretion was considered "Reformed."

If this can be accepted, then Article 61 does not warrant or sustain the idea or the practice of "close communion" in the sense of "None . . . except . . . Reformed"; if this is accepted, then Article 61 does not preclude access to the communion table for persons who are of evangelical conviction and commitment but who do not belong to a denomination that carries the name "Reformed" in its banner.

What we have said does not militate, of course not, against the practice of "close communion" in the sense of "only for those to whom the Board of Control has given the go-sign." The institution of "close communion" so construed can continue; as far as the present writer can see, it should continue.

## *BOOK NOTES*

*Community, State and Church,* Three Essays by Karl Barth. (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, Doubleday & Co., 1960), 189 pp., 95 cents.

This paperback presents three essays by Karl Barth. The first is *Gospel and Law,* published originally as *Evangelium und Gesetz* in 1935 in *Theologische Existenz Heute.* Barth intended to deliver it as a lecture, but was prevented by the Gestapo. While he was being spirited across the border to Switzerland, it was read in his name by another. In this essay Barth presents his understanding of the relationship between law and gospel. The law is not against the gospel. It is rather a part of, and because of sin, a necessary form of the gospel. The gospel sometimes comes in the form of law, just as grace sometimes comes in the form of judgment. The character and meaning of law, therefore, can only be understood *within* the context of grace. Hence, although the early Barth (in his *Romerbrief*) placed the accent on law (crisis), the later Barth, already in 1935 (two years after the bottom of the depression, the rise of Hitler to power, and the first volume of Barth's *Kirchliche Dogmatik*) placed the accent on grace. Hence his reversal of the usual order: law and grace, and the essay's title: *Gospel and Law.*

His second essay, *Church and State,* reveals this same strict Christocentricism. The State is not an expression of natural law and thus of the essential goodness of nature and man. This would spell natural theology. Nor is the State, as in the Augustinian-Reformation view, an order of preservation. This would violate Barth's Christocentric principle. The State is rather a form of the Lordship of Christ (just

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as the law is a form of grace). In this interesting attempt to relate the State to the Church and its theology, Barth is frequently less than convincing.

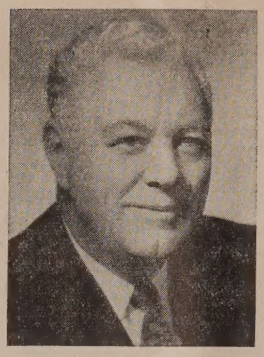
Space forbids any discussion of his third essay, *Christian Community and Civil Community*. Anyone interested in knowing the man and the theology which goes by the name of Karl Barth should read these three essays. I should not, however, fail to say that the fine introductory essay, *The Social Philosophy of Karl Barth*, which considers Barth's strong opposition to German Socialism vs. Barth's relative silence about Communism, by the Jewish existentialist Will Herberg, is by itself worth far more than the price of the book. This paperback original gives very much at a cost which involves less than paper money.

## *LETTER*

SIRS:

The recent exchange between Dr. Wolterstorff and Dr. Runner, though perhaps rather obscure in places, was of interest to those concerned with the problem of whether the pagan can "know." The problem is a complex one, with many facets. One such is touched on by R. H. Popkin, in the latest issue of the *Archiv fur Reformationsgeschichte*. He describes the Catholic attempt in the early 1600's in France to discredit Calvinism by appealing to belief and faith (in the Roman Church) as over against reason and rational arguments (used by Calvinists to discredit faith in the Roman Church). Scripture needs an interpreter, the Roman Church, which must be accepted by faith, said Catholic controversialists like Veron. No, said his Calvinist opponents: Scripture can be interpreted by using grammar and logic, just as any other work can be. "Veron answered that the so-called rules of reasoning were set down by a pagan, Aristotle, and why should he be taken as a judge of religious truth?" Just what this shows, apart from the fact that the problem is a complex one, is of course another question. In any case, those interested in the Wolterstorff-Runner exchange may find the entire article of some interest.

DIRK W. JELLEMA

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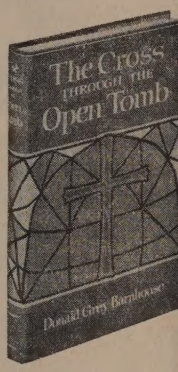


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